

"Yessum, thank you," John Edward was recovering a little. "There ain't anything else you'd like to change about me, is there?"

"There is probably a lot that ought to be changed, but I'm not running a kindergarten, and you'd better be running along, little man, or Jonesy over there will be bawling you out good and plenty." And she relapsed into an arctic attention to business.

For two weeks John Edward watched in vain for a sign from the little cashier's desk, but, apparently, as far as she was concerned, Billy, nee John Edward, had fallen into the waste basket of her memory, and he grew sulky. The more he sulked, the harder he worked and when he worked he couldn't observe the satisfaction with which the little cashier watched things from her cage two counters away.

He was smoking at the side entrance one drizzly evening after hours when she came bustling out and stopped to fuss with her umbrella. John Edward took it from her, raised it and handed it back.

"Thanks," she said approvingly, then, as she gathered up her skirts, "If some nice girl only had the time, she could make a right nice fellow out of you."

"You wouldn't want the job, would you?" John Edward jeered after her. She stopped to take him in with one business-like, inventorying glance. "Oh, I don't know," she replied, then disappeared around the corner.

In the days that followed, John Edward found himself rehearsing the little scene over and over again during slack times behind the counter. He even went so far as to imagine her in the various phases of matrimony as he had observed them and he was surprised to find how well she fitted into each of them. At first the idea amused him, then it interested him and he formed a habit of smoking and waiting around the side entrance after the gong had sounded at night.

In the meantime he had been making good. The neat, orderly habits of the service began to tell in his favor. The floorman got into the habit of stopping to chat with him occasionally when times were dull on the floor. Sometimes he found



"Will you kindly tell what the devil a man needs of experience to sell gew-gaws?"

a small addition in his envelope on Saturday nights, both of which signs may be regarded as akin to getting something to wear on the sleeve.

But he was not content. He wanted something and it made him uneasy when he realized that the something he wanted was coolly counting out change and totting up balances in her little cage with every indication of perfect content. As a safety valve, he pitched in and worked until he came to be regarded as a sort of a human wonder who worked whether the boss was looking or not.

Six months later it happened. John Edward found himself with one foot on the ladder and his first move was to go around and talk earnestly with the little cashier. This time she was neither frigid nor indifferent. She merely handed in her resignation and went with John Edward to a little place around the corner, after which they went together to a little four-room flat uptown.

Success went to John Edward's head. After a

reluctant surrender, the little ex-cashier found her greatest delight in humoring him back to self-confidence. The manager at the store unconsciously assisted her by shoving John Edward along a little. Between them, they overshot the mark and John Edward had a dangerous relapse into the old Huckins spirit. The result was the same old story with the difference that it did not end with a yellow envelope. John Edward quit.

Explanations were not necessary when he faced his wife in the little four-room flat.

"Well," she said at length, her eyes clouded with anxiety and disappointment, "I had hoped that you were grown up by this time, but I guess I was wrong."

For a moment she looked sorrowfully around the little home. Then her old briskness of manner returned.

"I guess I'll flit," she announced, "this won't be any place for me with you out of work. Sue has been wanting me to visit her for some time and I guess I'll start tomorrow. You better store the furniture and take a room somewhere."

The next day she "flitted," but before she went, some of her briskness deserted her. "You can send for me as soon as you get back to work," she said as she bade him goodbye, "and Billy," she added with a little sob, "don't keep me waiting long, will you, boy?"

By the end of a month John Edward had lived over some of the experiences of the past. He had even found it necessary to resort to the old expedient of smoking cigarettes and tightening his belt as a substitute for lunch. At times his knees were wobbly in the same old way they had been on the sands of Arizona. In addition, he was bitterly lonely. He missed his brisk little wife as he had never in his life before missed anything, and he became possessed of fear that she might never come back, for he was no nearer a job than he had been when she went away.

For the second time in his life he went off by himself to think. He went over the matter from beginning to end and no matter how he looked at it, he bumped his head against the same conclusion. It was merely the brig in another form. By the end of six weeks he had digested the matter thoroughly and was waiting in line before the employment desk at the store.

"Ah, Huckins," the manager greeted him, "what do you want?"

"Anything," John Edward replied.

"Well," the manager twirled his pencil and studied the face of the man before him through narrowed lids. "You'll have to begin at the bottom. How does that strike you?"

John Edward's shoulders went back as he looked the manager straight in the eye. "When do I begin?" he asked.

Two years pass rapidly when a man is busy; the hour hand never lags for the man who has no time to watch it. John Edward had advanced slowly, but it did not worry him. He was not looking for decorations on his sleeve and the quarterdeck was miles away from his thoughts. When he was not expanding luxuriously under the smiles of his little black-haired wife in their four-room flat, he was cudgelling his brains for some means of bringing up the receipts of the diminutive department over which he presided, and when he found an idea worth trying, he went at it with both eyes on the job.

At last there came a time when a place on the quarterdeck was vacant and anxious eyes all over the store were directed longingly upward, but John Edward couldn't take his off his department. He had no time. He had forgotten everything except the balance sheet he had to turn in at night, and he dropped his work with a gesture of impatience when they sent for him to come to the office.

When the manager had finished his little speech, John Edward realized vaguely that he had at last climbed the ladder and had both feet firmly planted on the quarterdeck. He looked from one to the other, from the old man to the manager, and his hand unconsciously went to his forehead in the old salute.

"I thank you, sir," he stammered, "I, er—I—whatever you say goes."

The other fellows came around at intervals during the afternoon to congratulate him and he listened to them with one eye on the clock and his thoughts on the little black-haired wife in the tiny four-room flat.

Her eyes were sparkling and dewy when she had heard the news.

"Billy," she said, "you don't know how proud I am of you! But I knew you had it in you from the first moment I laid eyes on you. You just needed something to make a man of you, that's all."

John Edward took his little wife in his arms. "Maybe so," he replied, as he joyously mussed her hair, "Maybe so, but you surely had your nerve with you when you tackled the job, Sis."

She giggled hysterically as she cuddled in his arms. "Pshaw!" she disclaimed, "Pshaw!" But the blushing consciousness of her smile proclaimed the fullness of her triumph.

The Smallest Waists in the World



A 12-inch Waist.

Though this woman is tall and Junoesque in proportion, she wears a 12-inch metal waist band invented by her husband.



This young woman can wear a 13-inch corset with ease, ordinarily she wears a 15-inch corset and 4 1-2-inch heel shoes.



A 13 3-4-inch Waist.

This woman has been a tight lacer from girlhood and can wear a 13 3-4-inch corset easily.

RECENTLY a prominent illustrated London newspaper made a world's championship claim for a young English woman that no one in the United States has yet arisen to dispute—namely the world's champion small waist.

It is almost beyond belief that any woman of mature years could live and have her being with a waist measuring only twelve inches in circumference, yet a bit of tape a brief twelve inches in length is ample to go around the wasp waist of the English woman put forward as the woman with the smallest waist in the world. This woman is tall and of Junoesque proportions, but she wears an unstretchable metal waist belt just an even twelve inches in circumference. Incidentally, the pride of her husband in her slenderness is reflected in the fact that he exercised his ingenuity in the invention of an unstretchable metal belt for his wife's use.

Other slender women were produced by this London newspaper, originally to combat the claim of a Parisian woman to the smallest waist in the world. One of them can wear 13-inch corsets, still another 13 3-4-inch corsets. The former is a young woman who ordinarily wears 15-inch corsets and shoes with 4 1-2-inch heels and says she is none the worse for it. The latter is a married woman who has been a tight lacer from girlhood.

was the envy of all Viennese women who desired extreme slenderness. One night before her marriage to a rich patron of the cafe, this young woman to win a bet to prove her tenuity, removed her collar, measuring a trifle over 12 1/2 inches around, clasped it about her waist and then tied her neck ribbon around it to the astonishment of the assembled company.

Tight lacing has not recently been very much the vogue, but periodically it is the height of fashion to have a wasp waist. Most of the possessors of extremely small waists began lacing when they were extremely young—literally stunting themselves as far as waist dimensions were concerned. The vogue of tight lacing is always brief, and at considerable intervals of time, because of the general crusade against it and because, too, women suffer altogether too much inconvenience and discomfort in attaining small waists in a hurry.

While it would seem to the uninitiated that tight lacers are physically unwell, tight lacers defend themselves and declare that they are not anaemic and suffering. The medical profession is positive, however, that tight lacing is a curse to womanhood and most of the world accepts this position as reasonable.